



A Special April Supplement of Footprints

The Uber Hiker

by PaPa Smurf

Volume 30

April 1, 2026
(April Fool's
Edition)

Don't be an Average Hiker! Want to stand out from the pack? Don't just be average. Follow these hints and tricks to really stand out from your fellow hikers:

"Don't be an Average Hiker! Want to stand out from the pack?"

~ PaPa Smurf

1. Carry a heavy pack. Don't just join the ultra-lite crowd. Pick up a nice humongous pack and fill her up with 80-90 lbs of gear. Show others who's the boss!
2. Stop at every stream, lake, and puddle and drink straight from it. Don't be bothered by carrying all that extra water or fussing with filtering. The odds are you are strong enough to kick any bacteria or virus that might try to tame you. Show the others you are not afraid of a little Giardia. Be a man and just take it.
3. Hike long mile days, and show your dominance; 60 miles should be the minimal goal for proving you're a true uber hiker.
4. Never waste time looking at "The Views" and communing with nature. Don't be distracted from the goal - showing others you can hike harder than them.
5. And if you encounter a Smurf, always, I mean, ALWAYS, share food with him. It's good karma.

--PaPa Smurf



Pet Rocks Let Loose in Forest

by PaPa Smurf

*“Please do not leave
pet rocks in the wild.”
~ PaPa Smurf*

Vermont has issued a warning to hikers: Please do not leave pet rocks in the wild. It has become an increasing problem when hikers discard old pet rocks from the 1970's in the woods. While the pet rock fad was an interesting commercial success, pet rocks are not native to Vermont. With no known predator, pet rocks proliferate exponentially. They are considered an invasive species and have become a hiking hazard, as well as an eyesore. Pet rocks left in the woods continue to breed and multiply. One particular problem area is the White Rocks area on the Appalachian Trail where hikers can see the damage that unchecked growth of pet rocks can have on the environment. We have also seen a proliferation of pet rock growth along stream beds. Please be careful with your pet rocks and never let them escape into the wild.



--PaPa Smurf

“Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus!”

by Dick Lost & In the Forest

Most of us in PVHC are probably not aware that we have a celebrity in our midst. You are, however, probably aware of how anonymously Clark Kent worked at the *Daily Planet* in Metropolis and how he often jumped into a phone booth to change into his Superman costume when help was needed. We have a similar situation in PVHC, that’s actually in plain sight, but you wouldn’t necessarily know it.

Well, this PVHC mystery man whom I’m referring to was in an elevator recently. And he was wearing a red jacket at the time. A total stranger in the elevator recognized this PVHC hidden celebrity and started reeling off all the things that he wanted for Christmas. (It sure is interesting that this total stranger saw right through our PVHC mystery man’s facade and yet others, especially PVHC members, haven’t seen it before.)

See for yourself if you can see the resemblance:



Now that the real Santa Claus has been unveiled as a PVHC member, what about the real Mrs. Claus?
See *Yes, Virginia...* continued on page 4



Yes, Virginia... *continued from page 3*



Do you notice their affinity for the color red?
A dead giveaway!

Yes, Virginia, there is even a Mrs. Claus!

--Dick Lost & In the Forest

Nationwide Environmental Hoax Discovered

by PaPa Smurf

Many of us have enjoyed the wonderful waterfalls along the trails, such as Bash Bish Falls in Massachusetts, Franklin Falls at Snoqualmie Pass on the PCT, and Arethusa Falls in New Hampshire. Who doesn't love the sound of the water cascading down from these natural wonders. Such majestic sights are a huge attraction to the hiking community. We all love the power of these natural waterfalls and the connection to nature they provide. Turns out we have all been duped.



Several hikers on the Pacific Trail this year, near Snoqualmie Pass, hiked up over the top of Franklin Falls and discovered that what was once thought to be a natural waterfall is actually a man-made, piped water feature. Additional investigations of Bash Bish Falls and Arethusa Falls



found similar piped sources creating man-made waterfalls. As additional investigations are being conducted we have found much of the major USA waterfalls, thought to be natural, are actually run by a clandestine commercial enterprise designed to dupe the public. See *Environmental Hoax* continued on page 6

"...much of the major USA waterfalls, thought to be natural, are actually run by a clandestine commercial enterprise designed to dupe the public."

~ PaPa Smurf

***Environmental Hoax*** continued from page 5

Our investigations have discovered that back in the early 1800's, John Muir teamed up with Theodore Roosevelt, to create one of the biggest hoaxes played on our great nation. Having found how lucrative to towns a wonderful waterfall can be, they teamed up, with the help of Congress, to create a CIA-funded hidden corporation to construct and maintain a large network of secret, public works projects to create waterfalls across the country. These man-made falls reaped huge financial benefits to the network of hiking guides, trail creators, hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions that profit from these so-called natural wonders.

As more and more of these man-made waterfalls are discovered we have begun to follow the tourist trade dollars they reap from unsuspecting hikers. Keep in mind, next time that you are enjoying that natural wonder, you are really just lining the pockets of your local politician.

--PaPa Smurf

PVHC to Bring Back the "Sharp-as-a-Tack Award"

by Dick Lost & In the Forest

Have you ever looked like a doofus or silly or stupid or just plain dumb in front of your PVHC friends? Once upon a time, back in 1999, in the 35-year history of PVHC, there was an award called the "Sharp-as-a-Tack Award." Recipients were chosen by nomination and voted on at the monthly club meetings. The award was humorously created by club member Shari Cox.

The first Sharp-as-a-Tack Award was given out in August, 1999, to former PVHC member Dave Rotundo - Dave didn't show up for a hike he was coordinating. The second award in September was given to PVHC member Rob Schechtman for losing his glasses, compass, and watch, all on the same hike. The third award in October was given to Dave Rotundo again for getting lost at McLean Game Refuge. The fourth award in November was given out to former PVHC member Sue Carey for closing a window on PVHC member Norm Plante and almost running him over. (This information can be found in the December, 1999, issue of *Footprints* on the Newsletter Archive page at pioneervalleyhikingclub.org.)

Well, the PVHC Executive Board is fittingly bringing the award back. I know of at least five people over the years that I would have nominated for the award to if it were still in place today. But I wouldn't want to embarrass them so they will remain anonymous. However, one of the them who I would have nominated is currently on the Executive Board, but I won't name names - the one who I call "the Human Toboggan." And to be fair, I'm sure that this person could have equally nominated me for the same award for what transpired on that infamous hike.

In bringing back the award, it's now your chance to nominate a deserving recipient in the club for doing something "dumb."

--Dick Lost & In the Forest

"The first Sharp-as-a-Tack Award was given out in August, 1999,...."

~ Dick Lost & In the Forest



PVHC to Charge for Parking

by PaPa Smurf

"PVHC has announced that it will begin charging hikers for parking at its club meetings, carpool meetup locations, and selected trailheads."

~ PaPa Smurf

In a surprising and unconventional response to rising inflation, The Pioneer Valley Hiking Club has announced that it will begin charging hikers for parking at its club meetings, carpool meetup locations, and selected trailheads. The hiking club claims this measure will help offset the increasing operational costs and keep dues competitive for all hikers.

The announcement has left both hikers and outdoor sport analysts wondering how the move will affect other hiking clubs in the area. According to PaPa Smurf, a leading hike authority, the fees are needed to address the economic pressures felt across the hiking community. Other hiking clubs will likely follow suit as fees become common just as the airline industry did with additional fees.

The following parking fee structure will be implemented starting on April 1st, 2026. The fee will vary by location, ranging from \$2 for up to two hours in central Massachusetts to \$5 for a full day of parking in popular carpool locations and trailheads. There are several ways to avoid paying for parking. For example, hikers who spend over \$100 in hiking club merchandise from the club's new retail store will receive a credit for parking. Also, those enrolled in premium medallion hiking club loyalty programs will enjoy free parking if they purchase a premium hiking club membership for \$250 per year.

In addition to the parking fee, the hiking club will no longer allow large backpacks or fanny packs on hikes for free. The general membership dues will no longer include extra baggage. If you wish to bring oversized backpacks or fanny packs you will need to pay an additional fee. Hikers will be limited to one small carry-on that does not exceed 2x8x16. Members with premium club status are exempt from the baggage restriction.

See *Charge for Parking* continued on page 9

Charge for Parking *continued from page 8*

In addition, due to safety concerns, no outside food items and liquids will be allowed on all hikes. The club will be offering club approved snack packages, lunches, and bottled drinks for sale at the trailhead.

Reaction from hikers has been mixed. "I come to PVHC for fun hiking, not to pay for parking," said Rick Esophagus, a long-term club member. "If I wanted to pay for parking, I'd join the AMC." Others, however, see the logic behind the move. "If it keeps the price of hiking from skyrocketing even more, I'm all for it," said Dick Lost & In the Forest. "I just hope they don't start charging fees for hiking the peak bagger lists!"

The Pioneer Valley Hiking Club has also promised to reinvest a portion of the parking revenue into hiking improvements. This includes expanded inventory in their retail store, upgraded snacks for needy Smurf hikers, and making overdue pothole repairs to major trails.

--PaPa Smurf



PaPa Smurf

"I come to PVHC for fun hiking, not to pay for parking," said Rick Esophagus, a long-term club member."

~ PaPa Smurf

UPCOMING EVENTS AND THE USUALS

- Every Mon. (MA) Monday Morning
Hikes w/ Chip
- Every Tues. (MA) Tuesday Morning
Hikes w/ Various Leaders
(MA) Tuesday Evening
Hikes
- Every Wed. (MA) Wednesday Morning
Hikes w/ Deb & Cheryl
- Every Thurs. (MA) Thursday Morning
Hikes w/ Various Leaders
- Every Sat. (MA) Saturday Morning
Hikes w/ Various Leaders
- Every Sun. (MA) Sunday Morning Hikes
w/ Various Leaders
- April 7 Club Meeting
- May 5 Club Meeting

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Next Club Meetings:
Apr 7, 2026, 7 p.m. at **ROC**
May 5, 2026, 7 p.m. at **ROC**

ROC - Red Oak Church, 337 Piper Road, West Springfield

This issue of *Footprints* is dedicated to my Mentor-in-Jest, John "PaPa Smurf" Klebes, former *Footprints* Editor ~ Dick Lost & In the Forest

Deadline for submissions to the next *Bootprints* is April 20, 2026

**** Check out our web page at:**
www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org

Members may join the PVHC Email List by sending a message to:
pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com



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A publication of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
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